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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to address the gap between multicultural reformers and school practitioners and policymakers, this review essay discusses four overarching conceptions or ideologies of multicultural education: (1) cultural fundamentalism, an approach which generally aims at socializing diverse peoples to mainstream society; (2) cultural conservatism, an approach that seeks to socialize by helping diverse populations adjust to living in two worlds, remaining part of their home culture while accommodating mainstream culture; (3) cultural liberalism, an approach that promotes the value of cultural pluralism, social justice, and equal opportunity, seeking to improve society by instilling a respect for diversity and at the same time instilling a faith in gradual social improvement; and (4) cultural liberationism, an approach that advocates preservation of cultural diversity and transformation of society through countersocialization and social reconstructionism. Though these approaches are overlapping in many ways, not completely distinct, and by no means definitive, they may help sort out the competing claims of different theorists and citizens, and could assist efforts for cultural empowerment in a very complex, often contradictory, and ever changing field. (Contains 17 references.) (Author)

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Educational Ideologies and Multicultural Education

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Abstract

In an attempt to address the gap between multicultural reformers and school practitioners and policy makers this review essay discusses four overarching conceptions or ideologies of multicultural education: Cultural Fundamentalism, an approach which generally aims at socializing diverse peoples to mainstream society; Cultural Conservatism, an approach that seeks to socialize by helping diverse populations adjust to living in two worlds, remaining part of their home culture while accomodating mainstream culture; Cultural Liberalism, an approach that promotes the value of cultural pluralism, social justice, and equal opportunity, seeking to improve society by instilling a respect for diversity and at the same time instilling a faith in gradual social improvement; and, Cultural Liberationism, an approach that advocates preservation of cultural diversity and transformation of society through countersocialization and social reconstructionism. Though these approaches are overlapping in many ways, not completely distinct, and by no means definitive, they may help us sort out the competing claims of different theorists and citizens, and could assist efforts for cultural empowerment in a very complex, often contradictory, and ever changing field.

Educational Ideologies and Multicultural Education

A short time ago I met Rose, my mother's second cousin, and her husband Louie, first generation Americans, Latinos who came to Southern California in the early 1950s from Bolivia. What made Rose and Louie choose anglicized names when they came to this country, giving up their given names of Rosa and Luis? What was behind that choice? What does it say about their cultural identity? What role should schools play in such matters? Perhaps this paper will provide some insights.

The purpose of this paper is to review several major educational theories and their relationship to discussion of multicultural education, issues of race, gender, and class. Drawing on Brameld (1955) and O'Neill (1981) I will discuss different possible definitions and approaches to multicultural education from the standpoint of four overarching educational philosophies: perennialist, essentialist, progressivist, and reconstructionist. Each of these philosophies holds a competing conception of the purpose of education, the nature of curriculum, and, by implication, the relation of schooling to cultural diversity. This task is undertaken based on my belief that the current literature on multicultural education (a reform movement) has failed to cover the waterfront, failed to account for the educational and political ideologies of many teachers and educational professionals, as well as the entrenched and complex belief systems of citizens which multicultural education is attempting to change. This failure may lessen the possible impact that multicultural education reformers could have on schools.

As Larry Cuban's work has illustrated (1984), lasting educational reform

is difficult to achieve. Advocates of multicultural education must take into account or be defeated by the realities of schools and society. In social studies education, the public, school administrators, and the majority of practitioners do not share the reform orientation of theorists (Shaver, 1989; Leming, 1989). Something similar may be at work in multicultural education. A recent study by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago asked individuals in 300 U. S. communities to rate African-Americans, Hispanics, Jews, Asians, and whites on several characteristics. The chief finding: stereotypes are still very common. For example, a majority believes that blacks are more likely to be lazy, violence prone, less intelligent, and less patriotic (Newsweek, 1991). We live in an era of Willie Horton, an era in which civil rights legislation is vetoed, an era of conservative restoration (Shor, 1986). While advocates of multicultural education may have made some progress in the past 20 years, that progress has been limited by entrenched attitudes and beliefs which undoubtedly influence classroom discourse and student beliefs, and which may have limited the impact of multicultural education programs. As thoughtful and well meaning educators, it behooves us to consider some of the attitudes and orientations held by our clients, lest we be perceived as irrelevant to the world of educational practice. Hopefully, the remainder of this paper will provide some insights relevant to the world of educational practice.

Procedure

While not attempting to exhaust the literature, I will provide an overview of current theories of multicultural education. In providing this overview I will draw on two previous literature reviews, one by Wieler, a Canadian author (1987), and the other by Sleeter and Grant (1987) and cite

other sources that seem relevant to understanding the diverse approaches to multicultural education that are possible. From this overview I will develop several typologies or approaches to multicultural education, each of which might be seen as a distinct multicultural ideology. Each approach represents an answer to the following questions: How should schools address cultural diversity? What are the alternatives? What would make someone choose to support a particular approach? What criteria should we use in judging them? Perhaps most perplexing, how do we balance the need of individuals to preserve their cultural identity with the need of society for group consensus? For each framework or conception I will discuss: purposes or aims; rationale(s); target audience; pedagogical preference and content emphasized.

While describing each approach I will assess the relationship of the approach to the major educational philsophies described earlier (Brameld) by placing each approach to cultural diversity in education into one of four broad categories (my creations) representing a set of continuums ranging from cultural assimilation to cultural separatism, educational perennialism to educational reconstructionism, and political fundamentalism to political radicalism. Within this framework I will address the tensions between social control and freedom, individual and community, and some of the many contradictions apparent within and among various ways of seeing schooling and cultural diversity. I will also attempt to analyze the fit of each with competing ways of viewing schools, and offer an evaluation and critique of underlying assumptions. Finally, I will suggest what advocates of multicultural education in the U. S. might learn from this overview that can improve their chances for success in realizing at least some of their aims.

My intent in this paper is to provide a look at alternatives and raise questions, not to review all of the literature or provide definitive definitions for the field. Perhaps this paper will raise more questions than it answers. As a social studies educator who has focused most of his recent attention on the theory and practice of social studies instruction, much of this literature is still relatively new to me. Yet, sometimes a fresh perspective can offer new insights. This will be my aim.

Competing Conceptions of Multicultural Education

In what follows I will discuss four overarching conceptions of multicultural education. Each denotes both an approach and a definition of the field. Within each of the four large categories exist a plurality of alternatives. The four overarching conceptions include: Cultural Fundamentalism, an approach which generally aims at socializing diverse peoples to mainstream society; Cultural Conservatism, an approach that seeks to socialize by helping diverse populations adjust to living in two worlds, remaining part of their home culture while accomodating mainstream culture; Cultural Liberalism, an approach that promotes the value of cultural pluralism, social justice, and equal opportunity, seeking to improve society by instilling a respect for diversity and at the same time instilling a faith in gradual social improvement; and, Cultural Liberationism, an approach that advocates preservation of cultural diversity and transformation of society through countersocialization and social reconstructionism.

Each of these approaches roughly corresponds with the four educational philosophies described earlier (Brameld, 1955), as I shall argue below. Though these approaches are overlapping in many ways, not completely

distinct, and by no means definitive, they may help us sort out the competing claims of different theorists and citizens in what is surely a very complex, ever evolving field.

Cultural Fundamentalism

This approach seeks the education of all peoples for success in mainstream America, socializing individuals from diverse backgrounds to form a single national identity. While generally cognizant of cultural diversity, this approach seeks to de-emphasize that diversity while stressing the unity of all groups in a single national identity. This approach has come under a variety of labels or variations over the years, including assimilationism, amalgamation, ethnic neutrality, color-blindness, and education for an emergent society. David Tyack has described ethno-cultural politics as one of the driving forces for compulsory school attendance during the late 19th century, based on the assumption, which persisted into the twentieth century, "that there were *real* citizens- those with the right heredity and principles- who needed to shape others to their own image." (Tyack, 1976, p. 373) As Richard Pratte has argued, this form of assimilation amounted to an ideology of anglo-conformism which postulated that over time all groups would "conform to the life-styles, values and mores of the dominant majority" (Pratte, 1979, 63). This approach may be properly classified as fundamentalist because it was grounded upon a relatively uncritical acceptance of established social consensus.

More recently, a slightly modified notion has found voice in the work of at least three scholars. Based on a critique of what he describes as the harmful and divisive effects of attempts at multicultural education,

Selakovich developed a neo-conservative case for "ethnic neutrality" on the part of schools. Schools should treat ethnicity like religion, as a matter for the home to determine, and should not seek to impose pluralism, but should provide the students of all groups with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to survive in mainstream society (1978). While this approach seems similar to Pratte's notion of structural assimilation to the open society in which there is "no relative advantage or disadvantage to be had by anyone in the polity as a result of affiliation with a group" (1979), implementation of ethnic neutrality in the 1990s would fall far short of this ideal.

Diane Ravitch has argued for something similar to ethnic neutrality in her comments regarding a New York State curriculum report titled "A Curriculum of Inclusion." While Ravitch builds a case against what she calls particularism, and in favor of pluralism, her emphasis on "unum," on common nationhood and commonly held values, a sense of shared community, makes her a latter day advocate of cultural fundamentalism. She attacks attempts to help culturally diverse students by "inflating their racial and cultural pride" as filiopietistic, teaching children that their identity is determined by their "cultural genes" and contrasts this approach with her preference for "teaching children that neither race nor gender is an obstacle to high achievement." (1990, p. 46) In earlier writings, Ravitch seemed to lament the passing of attempts to construct a "color-blind" society during the height of the civil rights movement (1983). This notion seems quite similar to the idea of "ethnic neutrality" described above, but when coupled with an emphasis on western civilization, represents a slightly modified, thinly veiled argument for anglo-conformism.

In her review of competing approaches to multicultural education, Wieler

(1987) describes a similar approach as "Education for an Emergent Society" and states, "The purpose of this approach is assimilationist, or to eliminate cultural diversity by encouraging a unified, amalgamated society. The basic assumptions are that: the ideal society develops from a fusion of many cultures into a new, single nationality; no culture is superior to any other; and social harmony is best promoted by critical evaluation of cultural elements (p. 19). This is what Pratte describes as amalgamation, or "the ideology of the melting pot (1979, p. 65).

In terms of pedagogy and content, cultural fundamentalism would tend to advocate an emphasis on the great books and ideas of western culture, Anglo values, and traditional, didactic teaching techniques. This approach has much in common with what Brameld defines as educational perennialism. It is the most conservative approach, as Brameld writes, "The perennialist is the regressivist because he would deal with contemporary issues (diversity?) by reacting against them in favor of solutions extraordinarily similar to those of a culture long past- or even by escaping into an intellectual realm of timeless perfection (1955, 77).

Historically, our nation has supported schooling for cultural transmission. Richard Brookheiser in The Way of the WASP suggests that such an approach may have many positive benefits, and laments the balkanization of the schools and society by multiculturalism. In general terms and at its best, cultural fundamentalism purports to prepare all students for an equal chance at success in mainstream institutions. At its worst, this approach has taken the form of explicit racism, nativism, Eurocentrism, and xenophobia. While more recent advocates of ethnic neutrality or color-blind policy try to distance themselves from association

with such loaded labels, the import of their arguments is similar, emphasizing our common traditions in which WASP images and institutions dominate.

The cultural fundamentalist's conception of multicultural education is inadequate because it fails to account for its impact on the personalities and self-worth of individuals from culturally diverse groups. The impact is to marginalize diverse cultures and groups through education for social control. Color-blindness ignores the visibility and identity of persons of color, leading to what anthropologists have termed ethnocide, which occurrs when a group of people are forced to give up their language, values and traditions. As Pratte writes, "Historically, the ideology of assimilation worked quite well because its main fuel was a curriculum of shame. The immigrant and his children were taught to reject themselves: their dress, language, class and familial patterns, histories and life outlooks. In the school this shame had incredible power, especially when coupled with a high motivation to become American and by so doing come to share in America's goods and services... The all encompassing shadows of racial prejudice and discrimination are too far removed from the ideals of democracy and brotherhood for the ideology of assimilation to be viable today. It must be rejected as an acceptable alternative" (p. 81-2).

Ethnic neutrality or structural assimilation for the open society is an impossiblity, schools cannot be culturally neutral, at least not in the forseeable future. The notion of ethnically neutral schools is based largely on a comparison of cultural diversity with the white ethnic experience. Intermarriage has, and continues to blur ethnic identity for white Americans. It is possible that in the distant future, intermarriage will do

the same for persons of color. However, in the present atmosphere, neutrality assumes an equitable system and would simply tend to sanction cultural imperialism. Hence, it must also be rejected.

Cultural Conservatism

A more moderate version of cultural assimilationism, cultural conservatism emphasizes socialization of culturally diverse groups into mainstream society while retaining the identity of their home culture, becoming bi-cultural. The emphasis in this approach is on accomodation to the mainstream by the culturally diverse, or on accomodation among groups. This approach has been known by many variations and differing labels including education for cultural accomodation, education for cultural adaptation, human relations, education of the culturally different, and teaching the culturally different. In each case, the aim of cultural conservatism is to help culturally diverse populations of students adjust to society while retaining their home identity. Pratte describes a similar approach as the "ideology of modified pluralism" which encourages group members to maintain membership in the birthright ethnic group, developing new fused identities (hyphenated-Americans) while engaging in interaction with other groups in the polity through accomodation style politics (1979, 67-9).

Though some variants may be more assimilationist, and others more pluralist in orientation, the underlying purpose of this approach is, according to Wieler, "accomodationist, or to encourage the extension of cultural diversity and foster equality" within mainstream institutions. The central assumption is that, "new cultural and structural elements from the host community are incorporated into a modified cultural character." The

target audience in this approach is all students, but especially culturally different students (1987). While giving greater legitimacy to cultural diversity, this approach is aimed at helping the culturally different adjust to society by addressing learning problems of the culturally different student, or by helping students of different backgrounds communicate, get along better with each other and feel good about themselves. For example, the "human relations" model described by Sleeter and Grant (1987) emphasizes improving communication among people of different cultural backgrounds. This model, developed from desegregation projects, is aimed at the practical need to overcome immediate problems of intergroup conflict. It is explicitly aimed at social control, but implicitly accomodationist. Likewise, "teaching the culturally different" has the goal of "developing competence in the public culture of the dominant group" and at the same time help them develop a "positive group identity" which helps them build on their home cultures (Sleeter and Grant, 1987).

In terms of educational philosophy advocates of cultural conservatism would probably tend to emphasize basic skills and knowledge to prepare all students to function in mainstream society. While advocates of this approach may suggest a mix of traditional didactic and more progressive reflective teaching techniques, the emphasis is on the former. This approach seems very similar to what Brameld defines as educational essentialism, an approach that emphasizes learning content and discrete skills, and socialization to cultural traditions. It is a conservative philosophy, as Brameld writes, "The essentialist is the conservative because, however "liberal" his protestations, he would solve the problems of our time by developing behavior skilled mainly in conserving, rather than

changing, the essential content and structure of the pre-existent world" (1955, p. 77).

A culturally conservative approach to multicultural education is inadequate because it is too limited in its vision of social change, and too limiting in its prescription for accomodation. While it promotes a vision of the status quo, with greater understanding of diversity and less conflict, like cultural fundamentalism, it accepts cultural difference only partially, so long as it can be accomodated without too much trouble within the basic social order of capitalist society. Accomodation sounds strikingly similar to the approach to racial relations advocated by Booker T. Washingon in the 1890s. Its impact will likely be to marginalize diverse groups, or to lead to a kind of cultural schizophrenia among persons of color, the kind of schizophrenia illustrated by the life story of Richard Rodriguez in Hunger of Memory.

Cultural Liberalism

This approach includes most of what is currently referred to in the literature as multicultural education, and emphasizes either ethnic studies or multicultural education. It is an approach which promotes the value of cultural diversity, and promotes social justice and equal opportunity for all people. It aims at gradual improvement within the existing social order, toward the vision of an ameliorated society.

Not many years ago, this approach most commonly took the form of "single group studies" in which teachers and schools developed lessons or units that focus on the experiences and cultures of a specific group, i. e. Black Studies, Chicano, Indian, Asian-America, Women's Studies, etc. with

the goal of developing an "acceptance, appreciation, and empathy for the rich cultural and linguistic diversity in America." Some advocates of single group studies have also suggested the purpose of developing critical thinking, decision-making, and social action skills.

More recently cultural liberalism has taken the form of education that is "truly multicultural" and that is explicitly centered around the following five goals: 1) promoting the strength and value of cultural diversity; 2) promoting respect for human rights and respect for cultural diversity; 3) respecting alternative life choices for people; 4) advocating social justice and equal opportunity for all people; and 5) advocating more equitable distribution of power among all ethnic groups (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). Wieler calls this liberal pluralist approach "education for cultural understanding" (1987).

In terms of educational philosophy, cultural liberalism tends to embrace decision-making, critical thinking, cooperative learning and other reflective approaches to teaching. These are approaches which fit the progressive tradition in educational reform. As Brameld writes, "The progressivist is the genuine liberal because he would meet our crisis by developing minds and habits skilled as instruments in behalf of progressive, gradual, evolutionary change" (1955, p. 77).

The cultural liberalist conception of multicultural education is worthy of our consideration. Cultural liberalism has many strengths including a great deal of consensus on goals (Sleeter and Grant, 1987) and consistency with some of the most deeply held values of the American dream, democracy and equality. It is also the most popular approach in the literature. Among its weaknesses, a lack of emphasis on class and social stratification

(significant because stratification has provided much of the impetus for multicultural education) and disagreement on the extent to which class, gender, and handicaps should be included. From a conservative point-of-view, a multicultural approach fails to adequately emphasize the commonalities among all groups, the common culture that makes up a nation It could lead to factionalism, a new Lebanon, dominated by intergroup conflict and rivalry. There is some truth to such claims. Multicultural programs can increase awareness of differences and divisions among groups, and it does sometimes lead to stereotyping and racial or ethnic separatism. Critics to the left of liberal pluralism charge that it is too limited in scope, failing to account adequately for the economic stratification/oppression which has denied equal opportunity to persons of color. Yet, as an approach to education for all, cultural liberalism is a forward looking and reasonable alternative given the constraints imposed by capitalist schools and society.

Cultural Liberationism

This approach is composed of two major strands, which may or may not be related or linked, depending on who's doing the relating. Sleeter and Grant advocate education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist. The aim of this approach is "to prepare young people to take social action against social structural inequality." This extends the goals of the multicultural education approach to include social action to reduce racism and build a more just society. It emphasizes social class as a central factor in oppression of culturally diverse groups. Its goals are to "help students gain a better understanding of the causes of oppression and inequality and ways in which these social problems might be eliminated," and to "change teaching practices in ways that will make their classrooms more

democratic" (1987).

A second major strand in Cultural Liberationism is identified by Wieler as education for cultural preservation. She writes, "The purpose of this approach is segregationalist, or to help ethnic groups maintain their unique identities" (1987). An approach common among Black Nationalists and other separatists, this approach is built on one or more of the following assumptions: cultural separatism is the best way to keep a culture intact; cultural separatism is necessary to protect persons of color from racism and discrimination in the larger society; a capitalist society is unlikely to accept persons of color on equal terms, it is by nature exploitative.

In each of these versions of cultural liberationism, students are to be countersocialized to transform the system, or to establish a more equitable separate system. Each is an approach that challenges the possibility that mainstream solutions will have a significant impact on institutionalized and entrenched inequalities. These views are founded on notions of liberation for all groups, a choice of separatism or pluralism, and a vision of a utopian society. Sometimes termed "transformative," "emancipatory," "postmodern," or "critical" education, each of these approaches aims at transforming society, with schools playing an important role (Giroux, 1991).

In terms of pedagogy, cultural liberationism would emphasize critical and reflective approaches, asking students to critique social institutions, analyze assumptions, and choose alternatives, attempting to reach group consensus. This approach has much in common with what Brameld defines as educational reconstructionism. Brameld writes, "The reconstructionist is the radical because he would solve our problems not by conserving, or modifying, or retreating, but by future-looking. He would build a new order

of civilization, under genuinely public control, dedicated to the fulfillment of the natural values for which humanity has been struggling, consciously or unconsciously, for many centuries (1955, p. 77).

While cultural liberationism may be seen by some as too radical a critique of mainstream society, this approach warrants our support, at least in terms of its analysis of the problems of school and society. Perhaps the greatest strength of this approach is that it fully recognizes the socioeconomic pervasiveness and intractability of racism in the postmodern world. What its advocates often fail to recognize, however, is the unacceptability of liberationist models to many teachers and most school administrators. Radical theories of schooling also carry an air of "political correctness," an attitude that has produced a fairly strong counter movement among more conservative educators and has posed a serious dilemma for advocates of free expression. Liston suggests that many postmodern critics of capitalist schools are unaware of the contradictions built into their position, advocating free inquiry while imposing a radical critique (1988). Despite its apparent contradictions and the shrill excess of many radical critiques of schooling, the core of truth contained in these analyses is well supported by evidence, making cultural empowerment a reasonable response to the dilemmas of postmodern education.

Discussion

What does all this add up to? It suggests that advocates of multicultual education may benefit by:

1. Open discussion of the larger realm of possibilities for multicultural education. Why are fundamentalist and separatist views omitted frcm the conversation? As the study by the National Opinion Research Center

indicates, these views are far from dead, and are no doubt held by many school practitioners. This omission leads to an exacerbated theorist/practitioner split which may impede progress.

2. Recognition that teachers, school administrators and policy makers, and the public may have relatively conservative, moderate views of cultural diversity. A key question is, How can advocates of multicultural education have the greatest influence? This is a political and strategic question. We simply must know where teachers and schools are coming from to answer this, hence the need for in-depth research which develops a clearer understanding of teacher conceptions, practices, and student beliefs vis a vis cultural diversity. Questions that I think need in depth research, using melded methodologies but with an emphasis on thick description, include: What effect has schooling had on student attitudes toward race, culture, ethnicity, gender, social class, etc.? What effect has schooling had on student conceptions of their role as citizens?

As Pratte has argued, we need "clarity before commitment" (1979, p. v.). Such clarity could lead to more democratic, more rational decisions on the part of teachers and schools, and could provide a better point of leverage for multicultural reformers.

3. Understanding that realities are often muddled, a mix of traditions. Are these traditions contradictory or overlapping or both? Can an eclectic mix be forged into a consensus or federation (dare I say amalgamation) of approaches that will benefit students and society? We must act, and this inevitably involves making choices. Bridge the gap between theory and reality in multicultural education will take recognition of the utilitarian perspectives of most teachers and cognizance of their resistance to theory.

While teachers are not atheoretical, they do value utility above theory, and justifiably so given their charge.

4. Asking central questions like, What kind of society do we want? What is our vision? What are our commitments? Educational debates are discussions of competing visions of a preferred future (Tyack, 1976). What kind of future do the culturally diverse want?

5. Giving serious thought to the ways in which a teacher, community, or school district should assess these approaches? Which should be chosen? On what criteria should the choice be made? What are the implications of that choice for curriculum development?

6. Asking how we might encourage teachers and policy makers to critically examine their beliefs and practices to further the goal of equity.

At the outset I thought of Rose and Louie. Again I think of them. Why did they choose not to be Rosa and Luis. Perhaps in coming generations more persons from culturally diverse backgrounds will be comfortable being who they are, not feeling that they have to conform to an anglicized version of the true American. Perhaps schooling can make a more positive difference in the lives of future generations of Americans from culturally diverse backgrounds. This is our challenge.

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